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THE STORY OF THE PEACE

by RALPH HARRIS

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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THE STORY *OF* THE PEACE

By
RALPH HARRIS



The Author has undertaken
this booklet only after two years Sojourn in the
Peace River Country with Dilligent
Study of resources and con-
ditions as they act-
ually exist.

THE STORY OF THE PEACE

IT would be hard to write ever so short an article on the Peace river country without including a few remarks about the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers, for up from these streams in the early days of north-west development came the hardy men of the trading companies in search of new fields for fur traffic, and entirely through word carried out by them did the world gain its first knowledge of the great Mackenzie drainage basin that comprises fully one-third of all Canada's territory. However, long before the white man came to traffic with the native for his furs, the strong Cree tribes from the south, armed with the white man's weapons, were used to making excursions into the northern country of the Chipewyans and even to the splendid hunting grounds of the Beavers on the far-away Peace. Mingling with the Crees, and in advance of the white man, were those of the mixed blood,—the people to whom far more credit is due for the western development of the last two centuries than books of Canadian history generally give. Intermingling with both white and native, living on the outside edge of things, he was able to gain confidence and thus acquire knowledge of the interior that proved of great benefit to the early explorers and traders.

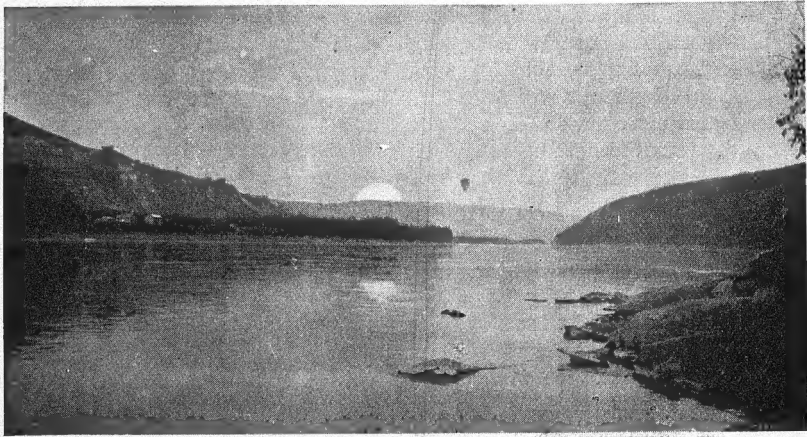
So we find that by the middle of the eighteenth century this vanguard of the white man, the French voyageur, had penetrated even to the Athabasca and was bringing back stories of its wonderful riches in furs and game, the two essentials in those days. He also repeated tales from the tribes that told of great rivers and lakes abounding with fish and water-fowl, and of plains where buffalo, elk and bear roamed in great numbers.

For one hundred years the Hudson's Bay Company had been extending its operations west from Hudson Bay, establishing its posts along the streams where the Indians brought their furs from the distant country. Traders from Montreal, also, about the middle of the century, began to journey to the new country and engage in competitive trade. From the American colonies adventurers came

for both trade and exploration, so by the year 1779 the Athabasca country was the scene of considerable activity in the trading line.

Among the first explorers of the country who left behind records worthy of credit was Samuel Hearne, who, under the direction of the Hudson's Bay Company, penetrated in 1770 the north to the shores of the Arctic at the mouth of the Coppermine river. On this trip he visited the Great Slave Lake. During the following ten years a sharp contest between the trading companies opened up the country adjacent to the Athabasca to a marked extent, and we read much of Peter Pond and his co-workers establishing posts along that stream. Those were the days of the Frobishers, McTavish, Peter Pangman, John Ross, James Finlay, and others, who were the first formers of the Nor'West Trading Company that for years vigorously opposed the Hudson's Bay Company.

Those ten years also saw the heyday of Grand Portage, Churchill and York factories and Norway House, from where the supplies and trading stores were brought by canoe and York boat over the mysterious waterways that threaded the Northland.



Sunset on the Peace

By the year 1779 the new country had attracted so much attention in the old countries that there were many sons of both England and Scotland making their way out to try their fortunes. In many cases these young men were of titled families and had acquired good educations in the schools and universities of the old land. They

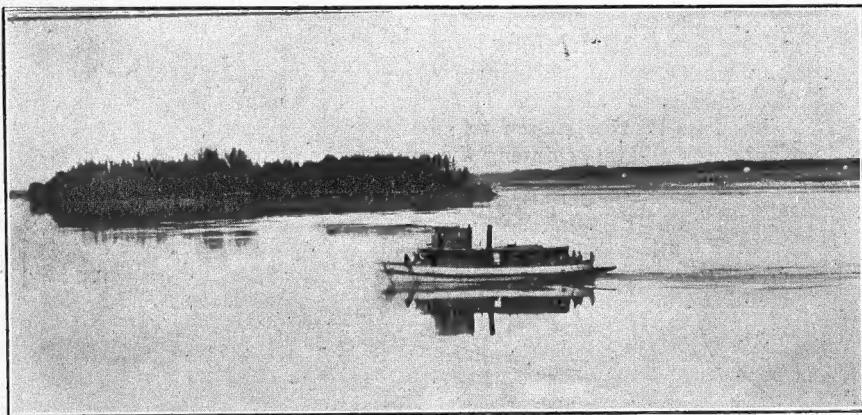
were ambitious and filled with a desire for adventure. The fur trade appealed to them. Among the Scottish recruits to the ranks of the Montreal traders was a young man named Alexander Mackenzie, who, at the early age of sixteen arrived in Montreal and commenced the apprenticeship that was to prove so valuable to the trade in the future. So rapidly did he advance with his chosen work that in five years he was bearing much of the responsibility of the trading concern with which he was allied. In six years he was a partner. In 1787, largely through his efforts, the scattered bands of traders working out of Montreal and other points, were consolidated into the Nor'West Company. This new company was destined to soon become a strong rival of the Hudson's Bay Company. At the age of twenty-four he was chosen to administer the Athabasca District, so here we find him beginning the work that was to make him famous and lead to the development of the great Rupert's Land which belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company.

On June the third, 1789, Mackenzie started on a memorable trip down the great unexplored river of the north that was ever after to bear his name. After an absence of one hundred and two days the young explorer returned to Chipewyan, having gone nearly to the Arctic tidewater near the mouth of the Mackenzie. With a view of further explorations in mind Mackenzie returned to England where he made a special study of astronomy and secured a more thorough knowledge of instruments for bettering his work as an explorer. In the fall of 1792, having again returned to Canada, he began the trip that was to give to the world its first knowledge of the Peace River and the country along its banks. Four years previously he had sent one of his subordinate traders, named Boyer, to establish a post on the lower Peace. Boyer, upon reaching what is now known as Peace Point, was told by the canoe men that it was here the peace agreement was reached between the Crees and the Beavers after years of destructive warfare, and he straightway named the river the "Peace." Boyer established the post at the confluence of the Little Red river and the Peace, a short distance below the Vermilion Chutes. Here it was that gardening was tried for the first time, and in his "Memoirs" Mackenzie mentions the fact that the soil was exceedingly fertile and the climate mild enough to allow the growing of turnips, carrots, parsnips and potatoes; also, he speaks of the abundance of game that roamed the hills above the Fort. With two large canoes manned by hardy voyageurs, Mackenzie continued his journey until he reached the forks of the river where what is now known as the Smoky river enters the Peace, and there on the north bank of the river he established the first trading post on the upper Peace. This site is about five miles above the present village of

THE STORY OF THE PEACE

Peace River and can be plainly seen from the cars as the train descends the hill into the valley of the Peace. On the old site lives Alexander Mackenzie, a retired H. B. trader, and a descendant of the discoverer's family.

The explorer had, in the spring, sent ahead men to cut timbers and provide material for erecting stockades so that by the time winter set in he was comfortably housed. The following year the



Steamer on the Peace

explorer made his way to the Pacific coast, returning the succeeding spring, when he left the Peace never to return. Not, however, without leaving behind the most minute instructions for the future conducting of the trading business.

Immediately after the establishment of the traders along the river the cultivation of vegetables was begun. It is not known by the writer at just what time the cultivation of grain was commenced, but by the beginning of the new century several chief traders were recording notes about the yield. The growing of grain in the far north was virtually forced on these men by the almost impossible distances over which supplies had to be brought and it was a well established maxim of the companies that those who engaged in the business must live off the land in which they found themselves. So, with the exception of tea and an occasional supply of sugar, the trader and voyageur fed on game and on what he could raise in the little plots of ground about the forts. The hunger for green stuff led them to experiment as far north as Fort Good Hope where, within fifteen miles of the Arctic Circle, vegetables were successfully grown.

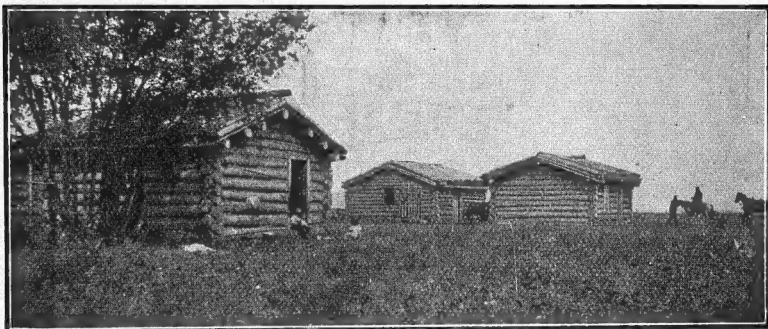
The story of the Peace for the next one hundred years is virtually the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1820 a consolidation of the two companies, that is the Hudson's Bay Company and the Nor'West Trading Company, took place, and the old fort at the confluence of the Smoky and Peace rivers was soon afterward abandoned, the post being moved fifty miles up the Peace river to Dunvegan, where for many years was maintained the headquarters of the company, and the establishment in time became quite pretentious. All the goods for the outlying posts were brought here for distribution; a large garden and a considerable amount of grain were raised and it was here the first flour ever made in the north country was milled. In about 1840 the first cattle were brought in. In fact, Dunvegan became the centre for the people of the north.

In the sixties an overspill of miners from the Caribou mountains in British Columbia discovered paying diggings on the upper waters of the Peace and when they had worked it pretty well out most of them went their way, but a few of these old miners are to this day still hunting for the elusive pay-streak. Some of them drifted down the river and settled on the rich plains of the Peace. We owe much to these men who caught the vision of what could be done with the wonderful land of their adoption, and never failed to sing its praises to an incredulous world.

It must be remembered that during the century many travelers and explorers visited the Peace and brought out word of its vast possibilities, but all of western Canada with her wide prairies, was in the making then, and many, in fact most of those who started out home-seeking, found in the south and eastern portion land that suited their requirements, so this northern portion remained a fur land till long after the south was practically all settled. Thirty-four years ago the Hudson's Bay Company laboriously brought overland from Fort Garry (Winnipeg) machinery with which to build a steamboat at Lake Athabasca. This was the first steamboat on northern waters and was built by John Sutherland, who is still in the company's employ, being chief engineer on the S. S. Athabasca, which plies the Peace river. However, it was some years after the Graham was built that the Peace river had her first steamboat and the goods for the posts along her banks were still conveyed in scows or York boats, the song of the voyageurs echoing among her hills as they laboriously pulled on the taut line.

When the railroad reached the city of Edmonton in the eighties the freight route to the north was changed to come via Athabasca Landing, thence up the Athabasca river to Lesser Slave lake and from there to Peace River overland by the old two-wheeled Red River

carts. As late as 1910 the Peace was still essentially a fur country, but more and more her farming possibilities were coming to light. The missionaries of both the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches had come into the country some years previously and were constantly experimenting with the raising of vegetables and grain, and some of the results obtained by these consecrated men, who found that example was often greater than precept, surprised all who saw them. Around the mission stations gardens were made that went far



A Typical Homestead

toward the maintenance of the missionaries. Many new varieties of seed were brought in and experiments made that have proved of much benefit to the farmers of today.

In 1898 when the Klondike rush took place many of those en route to the new Eldorado came by way of the Peace, where they stopped to build boats with which to continue their journey. These men, when they had returned to their former homes, told of the wonder-land through which they had passed and its great agricultural possibilities. Gradually, yet very slowly, there was a marshalling of forces that were to open to the home-seeker the new land. In 1911 the Dominion government finished a telegraph line into the Peace river country as far as Grande Prairie, putting the people in closer touch with the outside world and making the few homesteaders feel their isolation less.

The modern portion of the story of the Peace really dates from the coming of this telegraph line, for about this time commenced the movement of settlers that was to gradually grow stronger till the whole of the land would know the plow and yield its returns to men. In 1910 eight families came from Toronto and settled at Beaver Lodge, close to Lake Saskatoon. They trekked all the way with ox teams and were a sturdy lot of pioneers. The next year saw another

group of homesteaders settle at Spirit River, while some found homes at Griffin Creek and Waterhole on the north side of the Peace river. Then the Grand Trunk completed a line of rails to Edson, and the Edson trail, famous for its character,—or lack of it, opened up, and along this trail came a steady stream of settlers bound for the Grande Prairie district. By 1913 the Canadian Northern line to Athabasca was finished and over it another steady stream of humanity poured. At about this time it became an assured fact that another steel finger of Canada's mighty hand was reaching out to gather in the last frontier. The E. D. & B. C. was building fast from Edmonton to the very heart of the north via Spirit River, with branch lines to Peace River (formerly known as Peace River Crossing) and Grande Prairie City. The world began to sit up and take notice. Some, desiring to be in on the ground floor, came on by team or in whatever manner they could, crowding the tiny northern villages, filling their streets with conveyances of every description, which were piled high with household goods and chickens; or, setting up small stores, catered to the oncoming rush of settlers. During the year of 1914 close to four thousand people came into the country.

In the Valley of the Peace new towns and settlements sprang up and the whole country assumed a new aspect. Farming was commenced in real earnest and by the end of the first season crops were grown that forever put the country's fitness as a crop producer beyond the experimental stage.

Now with a main line pointing to the coast and branch lines reaching out in two other directions, the railroad is hauling to market as fine wheat and oats as ever grew in Canada. In fact, two World's Fair prizes have been taken by northern wheat. As far back as the year of the Philadelphia Centennial, 1875, wheat grown at Fort Chipewyan by some missionaries, took a medal. Again, at the Chicago World's Fair wheat grown by the Reverend Gough Brick at the Anglican mission farm, twelve miles north of the village of Peace River, was awarded the grand prize.

A very noticeable result of the settlement of the country so far is the predominance of the English-speaking races. The Motherland, eastern Canada and the United States have sent nearly equal shares of pioneers who have already laid the foundation of the institutions they prize so dearly in church, school and press. Wherever you turn, the smoke from the homestead cabin ascends; the long furrows of black soil reek with richness; the school bell rings in the distance and the last great West is ready to welcome the homesteader from every land and clime. Fully ten thousand people are there now, but what are ten thousand when there is room for millions?

HOW TO SEE THE PEACE RIVER COUNTRY

WITH the finish of the railroad to Peace River the trip through the Peace river country is made comparatively easy. The expense of the trip has been greatly reduced and the accommodations for the traveler have increased, until now one need not spend an uncomfortable day or night while seeing that part of the north between the Smoky and the British Columbia line, including both sides of the Peace river.

There are two ways of taking the trip. Either way will show the traveler not only the settled portions of the country but will reveal to him the vast public domain yet calling for settlers. Homesteaders or business men who intend settling in the country can now, with light expense, determine the locality that suits them best, while the sightseeing tourist loops the loop and sees the Peace in a way never dreamed of by the old-timer.

A day and a night by rail from Edmonton will carry one to Peace River, three hundred miles north of the Capital city, one of the oldest settlements in the north, with a population of 700 people, situated on the banks of the Peace river in the centre of six hundred miles of navigable water. Scarcely a day passes in summer without a steamer leaving for Fort Vermilion, three hundred miles to the north, or to Hudson's Hope, three hundred miles west. A good wagon and auto road leads to Dunvegan, sixty miles west. This road leads through the best settled district north of the river and passes many points of interest. Twelve miles up the river from the village of Peace River, and before it ascends to the plateau above, the road passes through Shaftsbury Settlement. Here have been located for many years the Roman Catholic and English missions, and the home of T. A. Brick; on the road thither will be seen the site of the old stockade trading post established by Alexander Mackenzie, the explorer and trader, in 1793.

Bear lake, a beautiful body of water ten miles long, around which cluster some of the richest homesteads in the country, lies back eight miles from the river on the plateau. Waterhole, Hemstock, Griffin Creek, and other points, at all of which small stores are kept, are in the midst of the very richest farming districts. At Dunvegan the road crosses back to the south side of the Peace, continuing to the Spirit River settlement, fifteen miles south of the Peace river, where one will find another thriving town of several hundred people. At this point one may take the train to Grande

Prairie, fifty miles south, or turn west and continue one's journey by team or auto to Pouce Coupe, one hundred miles distant. This district is settling rapidly and is unexcelled for farming and stock raising.

The return to the end of steel from this point can be made by driving to Grande Prairie, via Lake Saskatoon, or, turning north to the Peace, where steamers will carry one back to the village of Peace River.

The whole scheme of travel may be exactly reversed by going from Edmonton direct to Grande Prairie, four hundred miles north. Here one will find in the village and immediate territory some 800



Roman Catholic Mission Farm, Peace River

people. Here, too, one may observe the best illustrations of what real farming will accomplish in the north, of any place yet settled, for it was here the first settlers came and time has given them an opportunity to develop their farms. Stock raising, also, has, perhaps, reached a greater degree of perfection at this point than elsewhere. Throughout the Grande Prairie district are located many thriving towns, among them Lake Saskatoon, Beaver Lodge, Bezan-son. From the town of Grande Prairie good roads lead to the British Columbia line and to different points on the Peace where steamboat connections may be made. No less than eighteen power boats will be plying on the Peace river during the summer.

Adjacent to the various towns mentioned herein, and throughout the country lying between them, good homesteading lands are available. A ten to fifteen days' trip from Edmonton will cover most of the interesting points and give one a fair knowledge of the valley of the Peace. A trip of shorter duration will cover many miles of the north and make one want to see more.

CLIMATE, ETC.

THE climate of the Peace River country is one of the most difficult of subjects to treat, the reason being that the minds of most people have been warped and prejudiced by the teaching received in early childhood when in their geographies they saw pictures of the Eskimos crouched over a hole cut in the ice, with uplifted spears ready to strike at a fish or seal. Then there were pictures of polar bears with gaping red mouths as they stood on a floating iceberg. Who has not seen them? We associated all these things with the countries that lay parallel with the lower end of the Hudson bay.

The writer believes that to best describe the climate of this part of the world it will be more convincing to speak of some things which it lacks and leave the rest to the imagination of the readers. A blizzard is rarely known, and the winter trail when once broken remains firm and level till spring. There is very little moisture in the air during the winter, so the cold is easily stood and proves bracing and enjoyable. The average snowfall for the entire winter is not over eighteen or twenty inches,—for the last three winters the average is eighteen inches.

During the summer there are no cloudbursts, no tornadoes, no sunstrokes, no days of oppressive heat. We cannot refrain, after all, from saying that when the snows of winter melt the north is flooded with the most wonderful sunshine; that as early as the middle of March the grasses and wild flowers start into new life and change the whole land into a bower of green, and as if to make up for the short period of summer Old Sol works for nearly all of the twenty-four hours in each day and brings forth marvelous results.

WILD HAY

Perhaps the most important, at-hand asset the new settler finds awaiting him in the Peace river country is the prolific growth of wild hay abounding everywhere. If it is in the summer time he comes, his eye is gladdened with the waving fields of ripening red top and buffalo grass. Along the edges of the streams, around the lakes and over the lowlands he sees the wonderful growth of slough grass. Even if he arrives in the winter time he will find as he travels over the country that just beneath the thin covering of snow a mass of tangled wild grass lies which rustling stock can uncover and find sufficiently nutritious to furnish a good living if they are running loose.

Wood, water and building material the settler generally finds plentiful, also; but above all these he prizes his wild hay supply, for upon it he must feed his stock until he crops his ground. If need be he can dig for water and go a long way for building material and fuel.

This handy hay supply oftentimes not only feeds his own stock, but provides a means of livelihood while he is proving up his homestead. This year, for instance, there are hundreds of teams employed on railroad construction in different parts of the Peace river district, providing a handy market at a fair price for practically all the hay cut within hauling distance. Besides this market there are always more or less teams engaged in hauling freight from the end of steel, while large numbers are kept busy around the town and sawmills. Then, there is the traveling public that drives through the country spying out the new land; all these add to the hay market.

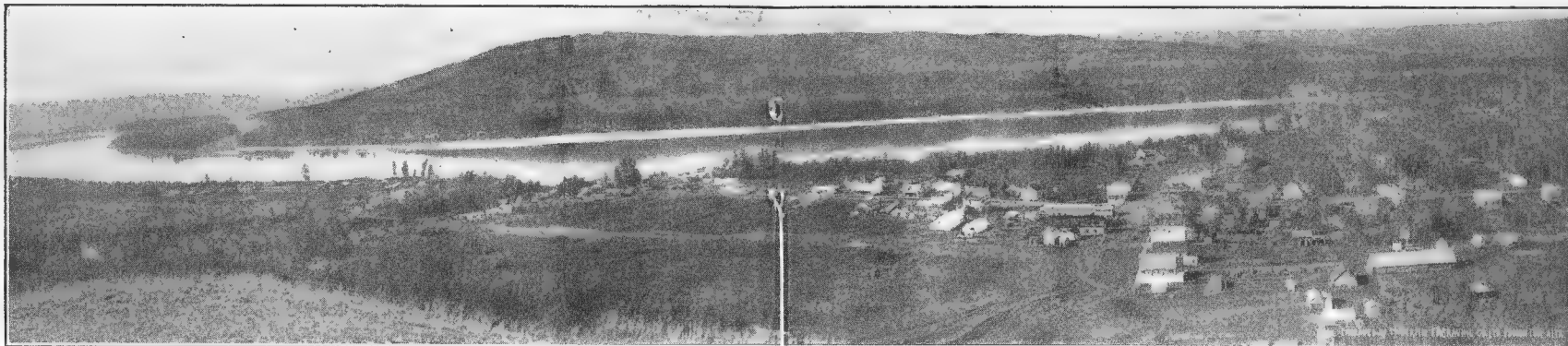
The beauty of it is, this ready industry calls for very little investment on the part of the settler. His team he must have, anyway; a mowing machine and a rake cost around a hundred dollars, and he is ready for business. No covering is necessary for hay stacked outside, as the harvest comes after the rainy season is ended; anyway, the top layer of the fine grass soon forms a compact mass, turning any stray storms that drift along.

The upland hay that grows on the higher lands and on bits of prairie always found even in the most pronounced "bush" country, is the most prized as it is more nutritious and finer stemmed. When fed there is very little waste, as stock is fond of it. The coarser growing slough grasses, including red top growing in marshy places, crop into a heavier harvest, but are not so desirable as an all-round stock food; however, cattle do well when fed on it, especially if they are allowed to run loose and browse.

In choosing a quarter for homesteading, those bordering on good hay land that for some reason is not opened for entry are much preferred. In each township there are two sections of school land. It is likely to be years before these are put up for sale. In the meantime, those whose claims adjoin these sections generally obtain permits to cut the hay from them. Along the lakes, too, are many fractions, generally good hay-bearing lands.

FUR TRAPPING

Many of the homesteaders in the country have made it a regular business to go trapping for the valuable fur-bearing animals that abound during the winter months, doing their homestead duties during the summer, in this way making the money necessary to tide



THIS IS PEACE RIVER, THE FARTHEST NORTH AGRICULTURAL TOWN IN ALL THE AMERICAN CONTINENT; IT IS ONLY THREE YEARS OLD AS A TOWN, BUT CONTAINS CLOSE TO A THOUSAND PEOPLE. FROM IT RADIATE ROADS THAT LEAD INTO THE HOMESTEAD COUNTRY DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOKLET. IT IS THE TERMINAL OF THE CANADA CENTRAL RAILROAD AND THE CENTRE OF SIX HUNDRED MILES OF NAVIGABLE WATER THAT BY A SHORT PORTAGE AT FORT VERMILION JOINS ANOTHER TWO THOUSAND MILES OF THE GREAT MACKENZIE RIVER SYSTEM LEADING TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN BEYOND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.



Every turn of the Peace reveals new phases of the wonderful stream; wooded islands and projecting points seem to be breasting the current.

them over to the next winter season. The most valuable skins are those of the fox, including the common red fox, the cross, the black and the silver. To catch a good specimen of either of the latter two, i.e., the black or silver fox, means cash to the extent of from one hundred to four hundred dollars, and it is not an uncommon thing to see the amateur bring in one of these much prized beauties. Beside, even boys, and in some cases girls of the homesteaders, have caught furs to the value of several hundred dollars. Besides the fox there are bear, lynx, mink, beaver, muskrat, coyote, and many other animals, the skins of which are of more or less value.

The dry cold and the absence of wind in the north country makes being out of doors a delight and as the outfitting for establishing a line of traps is not much more expensive than staying at home, many try their luck each winter. However, the wild creatures of the forest are wary and have habits that oft times outwit the wisest of trappers, as when, without apparent cause they abandon a stretch of country where an extensive line of traps has been painstakingly laid. Again, sly old Reynard, in spite of all the trapper's cunning, gets inside information and trots quietly past the long line of well-baited traps to the hen house where he turns a fat hen into his supper.

OIL

It has long been known that the basins of the Peace river and Mackenzie river contain deposits of oil. On Great Slave lake the early traders found oil springs; oil oozes from the rocks forming the banks of the Mackenzie river in several places; tar comes to the surface on an island twenty miles below the village of Peace River in such quantities that it is officially called Tar Island. The great tar deposits of the Athabasca have caused geologists to marvel. The sandstone formation that first begins to crop out at Dunvegan and extends to a point where it intercepts the Devonian limestone at Fort Vermilion Chutes, three hundred and fifty miles down the Peace, has been pronounced by expert oil men in the employ of the Canadian government, and others, to be but a cap for vast fields of oil-bearing shales.

Within the past year boring operations have been begun in two localities on the Peace river, one at Vermilion Chutes, owned by D. A. Thomas (Lord Rhonda) interests. The other well, located between the village of Peace River and Tar Island, is owned by the J. D. McArthur interests and known as the Peace River Oil Company. Each well has reached a depth of some nine hundred feet, both passing through the formation predicted by the experts. The latter well has passed into an oil-bearing strata and preparations are being made

to take care of whatever output may be forthcoming. In view of all the predictions of the last few years regarding oil in the north, this additional evidence of its presence is most gratifying. The character of the oil so far found is of asphaltic base, very heavy, and said to be of the same quality as California oils.

The field is no longer an isolated one, and if oil is eventually encountered in quantities the railroad facilities for further development are here. The Thomas interests felt so sure of the final outcome of their oil-boring operations that they installed oil tanks with a capacity of thirty thousand gallons on their big river boat built this summer.



"Fruit of the Vine" in a Peace River Garden

PEACE RIVER PUMPKINS

The Peace river country affords many surprises to the homesteader. One of them is knowledge of the many things he can grow which are popularly supposed to mature only in more southern climes. The picture shows a pile of pumpkins grown by a homesteader on his first year's breaking. Now, one doesn't readily associate pumpkins with a country which the Hudson's Bay Company considers its best fur territory in all Canada.

If you will take a map of Canada and lay a rule across it, the centre of the rule lying on the centre of the Peace river, you will find

that the ends are surprisingly well up in Alaska and Hudson Bay. You will find, then, with what difficulty your mind absorbs the idea of planting such vegetables as cucumbers, tomatoes, citron, marrow, cabbages and pumpkins; but here they are planted and they mature right out in the bright sunshine that works during the growing season nearly all the hours of the twenty-four.

On the cabin's sod roof may be seen a growth of weeds and grasses that further testifies to the wonders of this, Canada's newest frontier. Between the cabin and the hills, which are about three miles distant, flows the great Peace river, eight hundred feet below the level of the homestead.

SCHOOLS, CHURCHES & HOSPITALS.

The first public school north of Athabasca was established at Prairie River in 1908. In 1910 Spirit River organized a school district, followed in 1911 by Peace River and Grouard. In 1912 ten schools were established; in 1914 thirteen new schools were started and in 1915 ten were added. The list for 1916 has not been issued by the Board of Education, but it is known that a great many new school districts have been organized throughout the north and several commodious school buildings have been erected. That at Peace River, which is shown above, is an up-to-date building, with four class rooms and high school accommodations. Grande Prairie has a splendid building in course of construction. The problem, therefore, of suitable schools for the education of one's children is not the perplexing one usually encountered in new communities.

Grande Prairie and Peace River are equipped with first-class hospitals, providing modern surgical and lying-in accommodations. Physicians and surgeons are now located in practically all the towns throughout the country and are within reach of all parts of the homestead districts.

Churches have been established wherever there is a community center. In the villages convenient chapels are erected and organized corps of workers keep abreast in religious work. As the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches have voted to unite their organizations, their work will be extended in a considerable degree. The Anglicans (Church of England), the Roman Catholics and the Baptists all have numerous organizations.



Vegetables like these are grown by almost every homesteader, making it easy for them to live fairly well.

OLD TIME FRIENDS

WHEN the old home is broken up preparatory to making the long journey into the Valley of the Peace to take up land, perhaps thousands of miles distant, a real concern is felt by the feminine members of the family, particularly, as to whether they will find in this new land the friends in nature which they have cherished. Will there be flowers? Will there be birds? Will there be fruits and berries? Or, will it be desolate and barren until, by their own efforts they are enabled to provide the accustomed delicacies for the eye and palate?

A two years' residence in the valley near the centre of the six hundred miles of navigable river has brought so many revelations to us that we feel compelled to share our delight.

The first of March usually brings spring and sunshine to the valley, gently melting the snow from the southern hillsides and warming into life the dormant seeds and perennials. Before a green blade of grass is in sight comes the little lavender crocus, poking its unfolding bud up almost before the snow has gone. In a day or two the venturesome little beauty flowers in myriads, turning the brown knolls into pale lilac. Nearly as soon comes the wild violet, nestling in its deep bed of mossy green leaves and giving out the old familiar odor, bringing back to memory with a rush vistas of rolling hills and barefoot childhood.

Hardly has the novelty of these first velvety visitors worn away before the real burst of bloom from the wild fruit begins. In what seems little more than a day acres of hillside turn from a sombre hue to billowy fields of white and pink, flooding the air with the fragrance of an old apple orchard. Pussy willows have bloomed and blown and the cottony seeds are aeroplaning everywhere. Poplar groves studded thick on hill and dale burst in pale green mass above their slender, spectral forms.

In the valleys and along the streams red raspberries, currants, gooseberries, and the ever present wild strawberries, high and low bush cranberries are swelling with promise of harvest. Higher up on the hillside chokecherries and saskatoons vie with each other in furnishing a riot of color.

To those with technical knowledge and a mind for research there are exquisitely dainty little strangers abloom in the damp, deep canyons and heavy forests where the ground is carpeted with cranberries, trailing arbutus and velvet mosses. Here the climbing vines wind their tendrils softly around young saplings, lifting themselves toward the sunlight and warmth above.

To our knowledge there is no record of any naturalist having yet given the time to classify and give to the world a record of the flowers growing in the Valley of the Peace, but widely traveled visitors have said that nowhere in North America can be found a greater profusion of wild flowers than here, nor is there any land where nature is more lavish with her color display.

Many a homesick settler's wife has found relief when she discovered growing close to the homestead cabin the little friends of



Lawrence Ranch, Fort Vermilion

her childhood days. For in what land could one have been raised that furnished no memory of pasture borders where bloomed the Cherokee or wild rose, filling the air with a delicate fragrance all its own? Or who would not delight in meeting the purple flowering raspberry or the scarlet strawberry? Even though she may lack in sentiment she will look forward to the utility of the glistening fruits soon to mature in abundance.

If she ventures into the inner woodlands she will meet Miss Columbine. This wild, sweet-nectar bearing beauty, with its cornucopia shaped blossoms, was the means of revealing to us the presence of another acquaintance. Who would have thought it, and so far north? But there he was, with his long tongue and strong legs, hanging upside down as gaily as an acrobat on a trapeze, stealing from the columbine its heart of sweets and unconsciously carrying to other flowers its pollen; he was the old-fashioned bumble bee. Hark! Who comes here? Why, if it isn't a ruby-throated humming bird, coming to claim its share of the columbine's nectar.

The drooping, porcelain-like bluebell calls for praise from every lover of the beautiful. Early in April and through May it abounds throughout the Peace river country. Black-eyed Susan loves the dryer, sunny slopes. For all her haughty demeanor she is a vagrant who drifted into the country in the early days with the first stock driven in. During the long days of blazing sunlight she keeps summer carnival to which she invites from miles around the wasps, bumblebees, butterflies and beetles. These she banquets in royal style, then sends them away richly decorated with her golden pollen. The stately speckled lily, known the world over as the tiger lily, splashes the landscape with crimson wherever it can find footing in a sunlit part of the rich mold.

The wooded slopes and open dales, however, have no monopoly on the wild flowers of the north, for in the low, marshy places and along the lakes and abundant streams may be found many little beauties, most of them strangers to the average layman. They look familiar, though, and make one regret the youthful neglect of botany. The proud lady slipper may be found growing in secluded spots, also the woody nightshade and the marsh buttercup.

We would not forget the surprise which greeted us on one lovely summer day when driving along the picturesque Peace river road a few miles out from the village, our eyes were suddenly dazzled by an array of goldenrod, the majestic national emblem of the United States. The carriage was laden with the exquisite flowers when we drove on.

In the fall when the spring and summer bloomers have spent their lives making bright the surroundings, the brilliant fireweed flowers, and as if to end the show in a blaze of glory this hardy so-called "weed" blooms till the hillsides glow;—a fit forerunner for the bargain show of color about to be displayed by Madam Indian Summer.

GAME

Game in the north abounds in great quantities and is a boon to settlers, whether rich or poor, for fresh meats of other kinds are not always obtainable. The largest and most valuable target for the hunter's gun is the moose, many of which are killed each winter. The bear roams almost everywhere and makes fair eating if not too old. Water-fowls breed in the north and on every lake and stream they may be killed in great numbers. In the fall of the year the fat mallards, from their far northern nesting grounds, come in huge numbers and while resting on the lakes are easily shot. Their meat is indeed a delicacy and will keep throughout the winter. Prairie chickens and partridges are plentiful some seasons, but for the last year or two have been made scarce by the large number of chicken hawks that infest the country, but the protection afforded by the planting of crops and the added food from the grains is understood to be increasing their numbers.

SEEING THE TRAIN COME IN AND OTHER STORIES

The two stood a little apart from the crowd that collected to see the first train come into Peace River. She was a demure little woman and snuggled up to the big fur-coated husband as if a little afraid.

Slowly, very slowly, down on the siding came the train of two cars, the engine a battle-scarred veteran of the three hundred mile construction fight through muskeg and forest from Edmonton to its present terminus. The combination baggage and smoker and the one day-coach looked as if they had been everywhere and were prepared to go anywhere, track or no track.

The little woman slipped her hand into her companion's arm when the screechy brake brought the swaying thing to a standstill. "It's a real train, all right, ain't it, Mandy?" said the big man in a whimsical voice, "looks just like the train that used to run on the branch line to Blue Hill, Tennessee, don't it?"

"Yes," the little woman replied, "and, oh, Bill! see the conductor wave his hand. That's the same way the conductor used to wave at us girls down at Blue Hill when we'd go down to see the train come in. And the engineer, Bill, looky; his face is all smutty and he wears the same kind of greasy blue overalls that swell young engineers used to at Blue Hill."

"And," added Bill, "they ain't changed the shape of that oil can he's using one bit. It's exactly like the one I used to use when I had to oil up at Blue Hill."

"Oh, Bill," and the little woman took a firmer grip on the big arm, "you didn't have to oil at Blue Hill, because the end of the line was only eight miles further on."

"I didn't, eh?" said Bill, as they moved away, "well, mebbe not every time, but I allus did when you girls was down to see the train come in."

HER PART

Ten miles from the busy little village of Peace River the main traveled road west of Dunvegan and other settlements of the Peace river country, leaves the valley through which the broad Peace gently winds and abruptly ascends the hill to the plateau above. At the foot of the hill I left the carriage and ascended the trail afoot for a day's tramp to just where my feet would take me.

My adventure brought me face to face with the part the women play in the settlement of a new country, also, a display of patriotism, beautiful and pathetic.

The bridle path into which I turned led through bush and open prairie. The day was glorious with sunshine and gentle breeze, the soft air laden with the fragrance of the wild rose, here and there and everywhere a riot of wild flowers covered the open spaces. Robins briskly hopped ahead of me in the path. Bunny rabbits sat fearlessly within a few feet of my way, their big, lustrous eyes displaying no fear.

I would not for worlds give the section, township and range, where I came unexpectedly upon the little house, but there it was on the



Steamers on the Mackenzie River

edge of a clearing of perhaps ten acres, fenced and cultivated, the grain two feet high and just swelling at the top with the promise of harvest. The cabin was built of logs and had for a background a grove of poplar.

I followed a trail through a gate, bent on giving a word of praise and cheer, but on the door was a heavy padlock and tacked on the jamb was a notice. I read, "Gone to Edmonton to join the 101st." I pondered. The date on the simple notice was less than a month after the war broke out, over a year ago! I walked to the barn; it was empty and evidently had not been used for months. My curiosity was whetted. I examined more closely the surroundings of the cabin. Near the door a tiny patch, protected by wire netting, was

abloom with nasturtiums, while in one corner just ready to mount a network of strings fastened to the roof was a bed of sweet peas. I wondered whence these flowers and their care, when their owner must be "somewhere in France," or even in his long sleep. Reflecting, I strolled around the cabin, where I found a narrow trail which showed more recent use from here on.

The woman's quarter joined that of my soldier-boy. I found her at home when I had followed to the spot where I could hear the voices of romping children. It was noon and she was unhitching a yoke of oxen from a wagon. As I approached the patient beasts meandered away to a nearby stream for their noon drink. In five minutes I was in the house and seated at a table drinking tea and eating bread and butter with the woman and her two children, the eldest, a roguish girl of ten, who had prepared the simple repast.

Ask questions? How could I help it? "The oxen belonged to a neighbor; I used to know him when we were school children" (unconcernedly). "When my husband died and my children became dependent on me, I came here and took up my homestead. . . . Oh, yes, I had help or I never could have gotten over the three hundred mile trail. . . . Yes, he met us there at Smith, on the Athabasca. . . . One year more will give me title. . . . Oh, yes, I hire help when I need it; there are plenty of bachelor neighbors glad to earn wages. . . . The chickens do well and two milch cows furnish us with plenty of butter and milk, and I sell some."

Back to the personal I edged. "Yes, the government keeps his homestead for him while he is away to the front, but they won't keep the weeds from growing, so I farm it. . . . How did I come to get this particular quarter? Well, you see, he filed on it for his brother. That held it for six months, but his brother didn't come, so it was sort of held for me. . . . The flowers? That's a fancy of the children. He might be home any time, and he would like the blossoms! Oh, yes, when I have served my homestead duties, I am free to do as I please, but—"

"Yes," I replied, "but—"

It was nearly time for the setting sun to throw its shadows across the deep gorge of the Peace, when I descended the hill, but the beauty of the scene made no impression, for before my eyes were trenches and men and war—and love!

WOMEN HELP DEVELOP THE NORTH

When time tells the story of the Peace, and the world is given a record of its real builders and developers, foremost among those who will be mentioned will be the pioneer women who braved the long trail willingly that they might be with husbands and sons in the new home. Their patient helpfulness while the homestead was being whipped into shape; their many sacrifices,

and in some cases actual deprivations, must be the theme of writers who would picture the true building up of the north. Woman will be the basis of the literature that will draw the picture true to life.

To man there comes a thrill with the thought of a new home in a new land. The novelty and the hope of profit to be acquired buoys him to the effort. His ability to rough it makes the conquering of a new country much easier to him than to woman. Yet she comes, and when adversity overtakes them, as it may, she is the one to hold the fort and not allow discouragement to gain an upper hand. It is she who is more often than not the moving spirit in starting the first school, and it is she who encourages by actual endeavor the coming of the church.

A trip by sleigh over a three hundred mile trail for the next year's provisions may have been hard on the man, but what about the woman who remained at the little log shack on the lonely homestead through those two months the husband was compelled to be away? If sickness came upon the children she must find ways and means of healing them, for no doctor lived within a hundred miles or more. If loneliness assailed her she must conquer it alone. She must use all her art and wit in conserving both food and clothing, for in many cases economy had to be practised diligently until the harvest came.

These pioneer women must be recognized as constructionists and thinkers. Among them will be found women who were formerly high school teachers and trained nurses; missionaries to foreign countries; women who have been trained in city churches to accomplish big things in Sunday school and young people's work; women who have held high places in society and club life in eastern and southern cities; college women with their B.A. and M.A. degrees; small wonder the tone of the new communities in the north approaches the ideal! Largely through the efforts of the women of the north liquor has been placed on the ban. Both political parties have lately recognized her value to the extent that they have given her office in their associations.

Another asset that will come to be appreciated more than it is now is the prevalence of the English-speaking peoples. This condition is largely due to these pioneer women, who, becoming enchanted with the possibilities of their adopted land, spread wide the news to the friends "back home," and the glamor of the "last great West" brought others and still others until now it will be impossible for foreign settlements to gain in sufficient numbers to handicap social and economic conditions.

Altogether, women have played too large a part in the development of the new north to be left out of the reckoning.

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